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Dear

I am writing to raise some important considerations about the social care reform and suggest how we can ensure this meets the aspirations and needs of disabled people in your constituency.

Whilst I welcome the government’s commitment to transform social care, this is a huge opportunity, and we all need the government to get it right.

Social care support is vital for many disabled people.  It is like a vehicle that helps us to live well.  The reform should first and foremost improve the experience of those who use this vital support.

This is why I believe it is very important to directly engage and listen to our lived experience and aspirations when these reforms are developed.  This so far has not been the case.  However, in the past, changes that led to radical improvements for those who use social care, such as person-centred planning, personal budgets and direct payments, were designed and developed in coproduction with disabled people to truly embrace “nothing about us, without us”.

These are the basic principles I want the Government to adhere to in the reform of social care:

* There must be a long-term funding solution for social care. People should receive the care and support we need to lead full lives. Social care must be put on the same footing as the NHS, free at the point of use. Therefore, charging for social care must be abolished: it is completely unacceptable that people on means-tested benefits have to pay a significant proportion of their already small income for social care support.
* Give more power to people living with disability or long-term health conditions, and support inclusion.  The law must guarantee us the right to choose where and with whom we live; have access to all necessary support to live a full life; and access community activities, like everybody else.
* It is critically important to ensure that money is spent on services that we want and need, regardless of our age; recognising that whilst we have an ageing population, many of us in need of care and support, are still of working age.  At the moment a lot of money is wasted by paying for care in institutions, where some of us do not enjoy basic human rights.
* Local authorities should record the needs that they are currently unable to meet. This will make it possible for the Government to work towards filling the gap.
* Reduce bureaucratic burden and enable us to innovate. Reform must promote a radical change in the approach, ensuring that restrictions are removed so that people are truly able to self-direct their support and don’t feel as though care is being done to them.

I do not believe the proposals so far will address any of the above.  They will not make significant improvements in the lives of disabled people who do not have assets and are not able to work.

I therefore ask you to raise these issues with the Minister for Care and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and urge them to meaningfully engage with disabled people and our representative organisations, such as Disability Positive, in the development of the reform proposals.

Best wishes